

## Education Punishment in *The Great Didactic*\*

Pei Yuyang, Xiao Jumei

Huzhou Normal University, Zhejiang, China

In the book of *The Great Didactic*, famous educator Comenius requires students to abide by school discipline or be punished by education. According to this book, reasonable educational punishment is conducive to maintaining the school management order, keeping teachers' dignity, and cultivating students' sound personality. Based on it, this paper is aim to explore the thought of education punishment in Comenius' book *The Great Didactic*, with purpose of searching some solutions for education punishment practices in primary school. In order to effectively play the educational role of educational punishment: The state should provide legal support for educational punishment to ensure the legitimacy of disciplinary procedures; teachers should make clear the starting point of the implementation of educational punishment to ensure the fairness and justice of punishment; and schools should improve their own disciplinary system, reward, and punishment in parallel, and communicate well with parents.

*Keywords:* Comenius, *The Great Didactic*, education punishment

### Introduction

Recently, teaching methods have become increasingly a controversial topic in educational environment. Although considerable research has been devoted to appreciative teaching, rather less attention has been paid to disciplinary education. Concerned about that, this paper is to analyze the connotation, the value of education punishment and to explore the implementation strategy of education punishment.

### The Connotation of Education Punishment

Education punishment is a kind of education method which takes certain punishment measures on the premise of respecting students' dignity and not harming their health, so as to make the students understand their mistakes in time and correct them. There are traces of education punishment in ancient China. "Rush to teach" mentioned in "Shangshu" (Mu, 2009, p. 20) means that teachers will punish students who do not obey discipline with a ruler. In ancient private schools, "flogging" was a common way of punishing students. Wang Chong, a thinker in the Eastern Han Dynasty, recalled his experience of studying in private schools when he was a child. He once wrote, "There are more than a hundred young servants in the library, all of whom are relegated by fault" (Wang & Zhou, 2012, p. 164). It can be seen that in ancient China, physical punishment was

---

\***Acknowledgements:** This paper is a general project of pedagogy of national social science foundation, namely, "Research on Central Education Administration in the early period of the Republic of China from the perspective of econometric analysis" (Project Fund No. BOA180050), the project of policy and regulation department of the Ministry of Education "Research on the development, practice, and historical influence of the party's education theory from 1921 to 1949" (Project Fund No. JYBZFS2019112), and "Zhao Ting's thought and practice of primary school education" in 2020 Phase achievements of "practical research" (Project Fund No. 2020SCG032).

Pei Yuyang, undergraduate, School of Teacher Education, Huzhou Normal University.

Xiao Jumei, Dr., associate professor, Teacher Education College, Huzhou Normal University.

mainly regarded as a method of punishing students, but the method was too extreme and monotonous, which was easy to cause adverse effects on the growth of students. As for such corporal punishment, *The Great Didactic* written, “We cannot think that we want schools to be full of calls and lashes. What we want is the vigilance and attention of teachers and students” (Comenius, 2014). That is to say, we do not advocate severe corporal punishment on students, but call on educators to pay more attention to whether the wrong behaviors of students have been fundamentally corrected after being punished.

With the increasing emphasis on the development of students’ physical and mental health, education punishment has gradually become a controversial topic in the domestic education field. At present, there are two opposing views: The former advocates “appreciation education,” while the former thinks that disciplinary education is not mild enough, which is contrary to the ideas of “student-centered” and “equality between teachers and students” advocated by modern education. Students’ individual development is a kind of restriction. The latter thinks that if we blindly use “appreciation education” and neglect to frighten and stop students’ improper behavior, we cannot effectively prevent the secondary occurrence of this behavior, which is not conducive to the cultivation of students’ sound personality. In the current society, there are two misunderstandings in teachers’ cognition of education punishment: Some teachers are afraid that punishing students will make their parents dissatisfied and even complain to the school and the education department; and some teachers confuse the concept of “punishment,” fail to define the boundary of punishment, and use it purely on students. The physical infliction of painful physical punishment or cruel threats, cold discrimination and other mental punishments that destroy the will cause irreparable harm to the students’ physical and mental health. On November 22, 2019, the Ministry of Education of China issued the “implementation of education disciplinary rules for primary and secondary school teachers (Draft for comments)” (Ministry of Education, 2019). According to the severity of students’ bad behavior, punishment can be divided into four categories: general punishment, heavier punishment, severe punishment, and compulsory measures. It is clearly pointed out that education punishment is the necessary means and legal authority for teachers to perform their education and teaching duties.

### **The Value of Education Punishment**

In the book of *The Great Didactic*, Comenius (2014) through a “water and mill” metaphor, concise, and comprehensive point out the status of punishment in the education system. If there is no punishment in the education system, it is just like that there is no water in the grinding table, and the education work can no longer be carried out in an orderly manner.

#### **Maintaining the Management and Effective Work of the School**

*The Great Didactic* said, “In front of the whole class, scold lazy students” (2014). Bandura’s alternative reinforcement theory holds that people can imperceptibly strengthen their own behavior by observing the behavior of others. For example, to see that a student’s diligent learning behavior has been praised by the teacher will enhance his tendency to study hard. On the contrary, to see a classmate’s stealing behavior criticized by name will weaken his tendency to steal property. It can be seen that the school’s punishment measures are not only to educate the students who violate the discipline, but also have the effect of making an example. The school discipline system can fill the gap. The purpose of education and punishment is to promote the generation and consolidation of standard behavior. The standard of punishment should be to solve and

eliminate individual conflicts, and no longer cause new conflicts (Dong, 2007, p. 16). As a part of the society, using disciplinary measures can maintain the authority of discipline, management and effective work, reducing the occurrence of violations and ensure the smooth progress of teaching and learning.

### **Preserve Teachers' Dignity and Authority**

“If he stands on a high platform and looks at all the students at the same time, no one is allowed to do anything else,” Comenius (2014) wrote of the teacher-student relationship. At present, the voice of “equality between teachers and students” is very high in the society, but some people ignore that “equality” here refers to the equality of personality of teachers and students rather than the complete equality in all aspects. Comparative studies, teachers have more abundant knowledge and experience and can give students correct guidance when they have ideological deviation. Students should respect teachers and obey their management. At the same time, the physical and mental development of individuals is different. Therefore, in order to better perform their duties, teachers need to establish a certain discipline and order in the class to establish their prestige in front of students when facing the minors with different personalities, immature minds, and poor ability to distinguish right from wrong. Especially, in the case of some students, who are not interested in learning, and even infringe upon the right of other students to receive education, the use of disciplinary power is an important means for teachers to protect their own and class rights and interests.

### **Cultivating Students' Personality and Ability**

In the book *The Great Didactic*, Comenius (2014) said, “Punishment” is only a means to deal with students who violate the rules and “discipline” is the fundamental purpose of education. Juveniles are young and lack of systematic cognition of the outside world. They are easy to be misled and misled by the outside world. Educators need to timely and effectively punish the students who have misbehaved in the critical period of the formation of their values, so that the students who have gone astray can return to the right path. They really understand what forbidden areas can never be stepped into and realize that they should pay for their own behavior when they make mistakes. At the cost, we should constantly correct our shortcomings and form correct values of right and wrong. At the same time, proper criticism and punishment can also improve students' ability to resist setbacks, help them to establish a sense of respect for other members of the society and a sense of awe for social rules, so as to consciously abide by discipline and law.

## **The Implementation Strategy of Education Punishment**

Comenius believes that educators should grasp the “degree” of education punishment, so that education punishment can effectively play its due educational role.

### **The State Should Provide Legal Support for Education Punishment and Guarantee the Legitimacy of Disciplinary Procedure**

Comenius in the book of *The Great Didactic* stressed the need to systematize discipline and form specific provisions when talking about school discipline: “As for discipline, it is better for people who educate young people to know its goals and materials. And the various forms that may be taken, and then he can know why he should use systematic strictness” (Comenius, 2014). Although it is stipulated in the law on the protection of minors, the education law and the detailed rules for the implementation of the compulsory education law that teachers have the right to criticize and educate students, and that corporal punishment or corporal punishment in disguised form is not allowed, there is no clear definition and standard for the disciplinary power of primary

and secondary school teachers in the existing education legal system in China. In contrast, Singapore has clearly stipulated in the law that all primary and secondary schools can punish students, who violate the law and has made specific provisions on the punishment. For example, in the case of ineffective school education, detention and other measures, the designated teacher can be authorized to whip the students, who violate the discipline for serious bad behavior, and there are detailed regulations on the whipping, such as the number of times of whipping, the location of whipping, etc (Miao, 2019). China's legislature should also step up the relevant legislative work of education punishment, distinguish the difference between education punishment and corporal punishment, and clearly give the scope of application of education punishment, so that there are rules to follow for education punishment and the rights and interests of teachers and students can be effectively protected, and the public opinion will no longer "talk about punishment."

### **Teachers Should Make Clear the Starting Point of the Implementation of Education Punishment to Ensure the Fairness and Justice of Punishment**

Comenius (2014) stressed in the book *The Great Didactic* that "teacher's action is based on paternal love, in order to establish the character of students, not to suppress them." The purpose of punishment is not to let students admit their mistakes to the teacher, but to let them get rid of bad habits and constantly improve themselves. When using the power of punishment, teachers should make clear that the starting point of punishment is the love of students, which is for the better development of students in the future. Punishment should be fair and just, based on sufficient evidence to convince the students, so that it can become a warning of students' cognitive errors rather than a curse of fear to escape. The way of punishment should not be limited to the punishment of standing, writing review, and calling on parents. Continuous improvement should be made to find a more suitable psychological way for students of the corresponding stage. For example, for younger students who violate discipline, they can perform in front of all students or decorate the class by hand. For older students who violate discipline, they can learn to prepare class materials, when a class "little teacher," and so on. This way can make the originally cold punishment more humane and more warm. After the punishment, the teacher should also follow up the student's follow-up performance to ensure that the punishment is effective rather than just form.

### **Schools Should Improve Their Own Discipline System, Reward and Punishment in Parallel and Communicate Well With Parents**

*The Great Didactic*, Comenius (2014) said when talking about how to cultivate students into high-quality people, "On the one hand, we must use harsh methods to make them afraid and submissive; on the other hand, we must use gentle and loving methods to elevate them." Schools should make it clear that although the two education methods of reward and punishment seem to be quite different, they are not antagonistic, but in fact they are unified. The fundamental purpose is to achieve better education effect. According to the characteristics of the school, the school should formulate the discipline system suitable and strictly implement the corresponding reward and punishment measures with supervision and management. In addition, the school should also communicate with the parents of students on the school's discipline system in advance to reach an agreement, so that parents can learn as much as possible about the school's management mode, and solicit the suggestions of parents, and constantly supplement and improve the system. For example, we can select several parents' representatives in each class to work out the rules of punishing students together with the school authorities, so that parents can participate in the daily educational activities of the school as active participants,

which will naturally reduce the probability of conflict due to punishment in the future.

### Conclusion

Makarenko, an outstanding writer of the former Soviet Union, wrote that “a reasonable punishment system is not only legal, but also necessary” (Shen, 2011, p. 138). Only by controlling the propriety of education punishment, making clear that the starting point of education punishment is to care for students, to choose the education punishment method of respecting human nature and to grasp the degree of punishment, can we better promote the self-development and improvement of students.

### References

- Comenius. (2014). *Grand pedagogy* (pp. 215-219). Beijing: Education Science Press.
- Dong, L. S. (2007). *Between autonomy and the rule of law: A Study on the exercise of students' punishment right in colleges and universities* (p. 16). Changsha: Hunan University Press.
- Miao, G. F. (2019). The current situation and enlightenment of school disciplinary education in Singapore. *Education Horizon*, 4(1), 77-79.
- Ministry of Education. (2019). *Announcement of the Ministry of Education on public comments on the implementation of education disciplinary rules for primary and secondary school teachers* (Draft) (EB/OL). Retrieved from [http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb\\_xwfb/s248/201911/t20191122\\_409278.html](http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/s248/201911/t20191122_409278.html)
- Mu, P. (2009). *Shangshu* (p. 20). Beijing: Zhonghua Publishing House.
- Shen, W. (2011). *Reading Makarenko with excellent teachers* (p. 138). Beijing: China Youth Publishing House.
- Wang, Y. H., & Zhou, C. H. (2012). *Chief editor: A thousand questions about Chinese traditional culture* (p. 164). Xi'an: Sancheng Publishing House.